## IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Withdrawn) An oligonucleotide for cleavage, detection or amplification of the mecA gene, a gene element of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), or RNA derived from said gene, which oligonucleotide is capable of binding specifically to said mecA gene or RNA derived therefrom, and comprises at least 10 contiguous bases of any of the sequences listed as SEQ. ID. Nos. 1 to 17, or an oligonucleotide complementary to said oligonucleotide.

2. (Withdrawn) The oligonucleotide according to Claim 1, wherein said oligonucleotide is an oligonucleotide primer for DNA elongation reaction.

3. (Withdrawnl) The oligonucleotide according to Claim 1, wherein said oligonucleotide is an oligonucleotide probe a portion of which is modified or labeled with a detectable marker.

4. (Withdrawn) The oligonucleotide according to Claim 3, wherein said oligonucleotide is a synthetic oligonucleotide in which a portion of its base(s) is (are) modified without impairing the function of said oligonucleotide as an oligonucleotide probe.

5-8 (Canceled)

9. (New) A method for detecting methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) in a sample, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) preparing a reaction mixture comprising:

a sample;

a first oligonucleotide primer;

a second oligonucleotide primer; wherein either said first oligonucleotide primer or said second oligonucleotide primer comprises an RNA polymerase promoter sequence at the 5'-region;

an enzyme or a mixture of enzymes having (i) RNA-dependent DNA polymerase activity, (ii) ribonuclease activity that hydrolyzes RNA of an RNA-DNA hybrid without hydrolyzing

single-stranded and double-stranded RNA or DNA, (iii) DNA-dependent DNA polymerase activity, and (iv) DNA-dependent RNA polymerase activity; and

a cleaving oligonucleotide probe if said first oligonucleotide primer comprises the RNA polymerase promoter sequence, wherein said cleaving oligonucleotide probe comprising a sequence complementary to a region overlapping and adjacent to the 5'-end of an RNA derived from the mecA gene of MRSA;

(b) incubating said reaction mixture under conditions that allow the formation of a double-stranded cDNA product from the RNA derived from the mecA gene of MRSA, and the transcription of an RNA product from the double-stranded cDNA product; and

(c) detecting the RNA product transcribed from the double-stranded cDNA product, wherein:

(1) an oligonucleotide comprising at least 10 contiguous bases of the sequence recited in SEQ. ID. No. 18 is used as the first primer and an oligonucleotide comprising at least 10 contiguous bases of the sequence recited in any of SEQ. ID. Nos. 19 or 21 is used as the second primer, or

(2) an oligonucleotide comprising at least 10 contiguous bases of the sequence recited in SEQ. ID. No. 22 is used as the first primer and an oligonucleotide comprising at least 10 contiguous bases of the sequence recited in any of SEQ. ID. Nos. 23 or 24 is used as the second primer, or

(3) an oligonucleotide comprising at least 10 contiguous bases of the sequence recited in SEQ. ID. No. 25 is used as the first primer and an oligonucleotide comprising at least 10 contiguous bases of the sequence recited in any of SEQ. ID. Nos. 23 or 24 is used as the second primer.

10. (New) The method of Claim 9, wherein said RNA polymerase promoter sequence comprises the nucleotide sequence recited in SEQ ID NO: 30.

11. (New The method of Claim 9, wherein said cleaving oligonucleotide probe comprising a sequence which is selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 26, 27 and 28.

12. (New) The method of Claim 9, wherein the reaction mixture further comprises a detection probe comprising a sequence complementary to a portion of the RNA product transcribed from the double-stranded cDNA product, and wherein said detection probe is labeled with an intercalator fluorescent dye.

13. (New) The method of Claim 12, wherein

(1) said detection probe comprises a sequence of SEQ IDS No: 20 or 29, if said first primer includes the RNA polymerase promoter sequence, and

(2) said detection probe comprises a sequence complementary to the sequence recited of SEQ ID No: 20 or 29, if said second primer includes the RNA polymerase promoter sequence.